

# English Champions Winter 2019 – 8

## An idyllic country cottage

Last week we discussed Henrietta Tufty's and Arthur Hiran's honeymoon plans. Arthur had been impressed by a glossy brochure from the *Aulney-sous-Bois* tourist board and had made a reservation at *Aulney-sous-Bois' Chateau BudgetPrix* hotel. He realized that he might have made a mistake and was pleased to receive advice from the French Management Team. He has now booked a hotel, even closer to the center of Paris in a quiet and charming suburb called *Saint Denis*.

After all the drama and excitement caused by the honeymoon problems, Arthur's and Henrietta's thoughts have turned to where they will live after their wedding.

A long term resident of *Squirrel Wood*, the village where the Tuftys and Hirans live, recently passed away. Miss Harding had lived in *Squirrel Wood* for all of her 93 years. Following her death, her home: *Honeysuckle Cottage*, is on the market.

Henrietta and Arthur fell in love with the cottage as soon as they visited it. It is in a beautiful location with a garden full of roses, hydrangeas, hibiscus plants, geraniums and, as you might expect, honeysuckle. There are also several mature hickory and holly trees.

The only problem is that the house does need substantial refurbishment. Miss Harding had lived in the property for over 70 years and the cottage boasts very few modern amenities. For example, the cottage will need to be completely rewired and a gas central heating system will need to be installed. There is also evidence of woodworm and rising damp. This will require the use of pesticides and the installation of a chemical damp proof course. Some of the window frames are rotten and need replacing. In addition, the bathroom is situated on the ground floor and it might be sensible to relocate it to the first floor where the bedrooms are located.

On the plus side, the house is brimming with beautiful original features, including exposed hard wood beams, hard wood floors and a magnificent open fire place.

Arthur and Henrietta are about to put an offer in on the house. The following is a more detailed description from the estate agent, *Niblick, Niblick & Brown*:

### Estate agent's property description

- No onward chain
- Two large reception rooms
- Two double bedrooms
- Beautiful gardens (2 acres)
- Garage
- Traditional features
- Breathtaking views
- A brook runs through the garden
- Septic tank

A charming, detached two bedroom country cottage set in an idyllic rural position in the village of *Squirrel Wood*. With a beautiful garden, this property is a lovely home with character and lots of potential.

You enter the property through a small porch which leads into the spacious hallway. To the left is the living room which boasts an open log fire and original exposed beams. The dining room is spacious with exposed beams and overlooks the garden and breathtaking views beyond. This leads to the kitchen which has a range of fitted wall and base units installed in the 1950s and space for a freestanding cooker and fridge. The kitchen has a separate pantry.

On the first floor there is a landing with potential to be used as a small home office. The landing gives access to the two double bedrooms and a small unfinished box room that could be converted into a bathroom or single bedroom.

The landing also includes a narrow staircase that leads to a second floor attic. The attic also has the potential to be converted into more living space.

The bathroom is situated downstairs next to the back door.

The house is on the market for 325,000 pounds.

### **Topics for discussion:**

Arthur and Henrietta are about to make an offer for the house. In addition to the purchase price, they believe they need to budget a further 100,000 pounds for essential repairs and modernization. They hope to do some of the work themselves. Arthur and Henrietta will pay for the house with a mortgage, some of their savings and the sale of Arthur's *Aston Martin* car.

1. Mrs Tufty is concerned that repairing and modernizing the cottage would be too much work for her daughter. In your view, what are the advantages and disadvantages of buying *Honeysuckle Cottage*?
2. Do you think the cottage will be a good financial investment? What questions would you need to ask to answer this question?
3. Is it a good thing that Arthur and Henrietta will be living so close to their respective parents?
4. Would you, personally, enjoy the challenge of 'doing up' a property like this one? Why or why not?

### **Vocabulary and expressions:**

**No onward chain:** The person selling the property is not dependent on buying another house in order for your sale to be completed.

**Chemical damp proof course:** A row of small holes is drilled about 100mm apart into a mortar course just below ground floor joist level. A silicone-based fluid is then applied under pressure into the masonry where it hardens to form a barrier to damp from the ground.

**Septic tank:** A tank, usually underground, in which sewage is collected and allowed to decompose through bacterial activity before draining through a soakaway.

**'Do it up':** To repair or decorate a building so that it looks attractive.

**Mortgage:** A loan in which property is used as collateral. The borrower enters into an agreement with the lender so the borrower receives cash upfront then makes payments over a set time span until the loan is paid in full.

**Collateral:** Something pledged as security for the repayment of a loan. It is forfeited in the event of a default.

**One acre:** 0.4 hectares.

**A cooker:** An appliance used for cooking food, typically consisting of an oven, hob, and grill and powered by gas or electricity.

### **Web site**

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